

# Birth Defect Series: Microcephaly



**What:** Microcephaly means an infant's head is much smaller than the heads of other infants who are the same age and gender. This is very different from small babies who have small heads that grow appropriately.

**Why:** Microcephaly is usually caused by problems during brain or head development. Exposure to drugs, alcohol, chemicals or germs can impair proper brain development. Also, not getting enough nutrients or oxygen during pregnancy can put your baby at risk of microcephaly.

**When:** Microcephaly is usually found during the first few well-baby visits. Your nurse or doctor will measure around your baby's head and track how it grows over time. If your baby's head measures smaller than most babies and continues to measure small your baby may be diagnosed with microcephaly.

**How:** Some babies with microcephaly will develop normally. However some may have physical delays, seizures, or difficulties balancing. There are no treatments to "cure" microcephaly. However, early childhood intervention programs can help your child with any potential developmental delays.

## Resources for Illinois Families

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### Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes Reporting System

[http://www.dph.illinois.gov/  
data-statistics/epidemiology/  
apors](http://www.dph.illinois.gov/data-statistics/epidemiology/apors)

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/  
birthdefects/  
microcephaly.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/microcephaly.html)

### March of Dimes

[http://  
www.marchofdimes.org/  
complications/  
microcephaly.aspx](http://www.marchofdimes.org/complications/microcephaly.aspx)

**And visit your  
doctor for more  
information.**